



Yeovil Town Supporters Society Ltd (Glovers Trust)

Minutes of Meeting with Scott Priestnall

25th September 2019, Huish Park, Yeovil

Present

Scott Priestnall (SP), David Mills (DMi), Stuart Burrell (SB), Brendon Owen (BO), Simon Brimble (SBr), Terri Burt (TB), Vernon Edwards (VE), Jon Hartley (JH), Dean Mountain (DM)

SB started by thanking Scott Priestnall for meeting with the Glovers Trust so quickly after taking over. He explained that the meeting was an opportunity for both sides to find out more about each other, and to ask questions. This is a fresh start and the Trust are hopeful there will be plenty of opportunities to work together for the good of the Club.

SP agreed that this is a fresh start for everyone, and that he is looking to use all resources available to him to progress the Club. Although he has experience of working in Football Clubs, this is his first time as front man. He wants to engage with the fan base, including all supporters' groups.

SP confirmed that John Fry and all the other directors have now stood down. He expressed his appreciation for Mr Fry's help and support during the takeover process, and said that he would like to do something to mark his 25 years at the club at a later date. He stated that he had a very good relationship with John, as well as Normal Hayward, and that this had helped to complete the takeover.

SP was asked about the land charge registered on 20th September, that seemed to be secured against Huish Park. He said that this was against him and Errol Pope, rather than the Club and also that it was a drawdown facility to help with realising value of the surrounding land at Huish Park. He explained that although he and Errol Pope had funds available that contribute to the budget for the next two seasons, the charge was set up as a mechanism to provide funding very quickly should an extraordinary need arise that would help to make the club more self-sustainable.

SBr praised SP for the season ticket offers, ticket bundles and Kids for a Quid schemes that have been offered this week. He asked what plans SP had to improve the match day experience. SP said he realised that this was a problem and it is something that will be worked on in the coming weeks. There are no easy answers, but as a start Huish Park will be cleaned up over the next week. He intended to speak to all service staff prior to Saturday's game about how to treat people and what their responsibilities are. SP said he had worked in service industries in the past and knows what needs to be done to get this right.

SP confirmed that he has meetings lined up next week with some of the covenant holders. These had been looming over the club for too long and urgently need to be sorted out – the club cannot continue to trade with its hands tied behind its back. The covenant relating to the sale of alcohol is a particular problem and will be a priority. Some other covenants are calculated on a formula basis so should be easier to sort out. He acknowledged that the relationship between the previous owners and some of the covenant holders had broken down. He has taken legal advice on the covenants, but wants to sort out the issues face to face, and in a respectful way. He acknowledged that the land around Huish Park would have to be developed to move the Football Club forward. He has no pre-conceived ideas of what will happen with the land. He has discussed with the Chief Executive of the Council some of the options. It is unlikely they would support any retail outlets on the site, but there plenty of other possibilities.

SP confirmed that an application to extend the marquee license has been submitted. In the longer term he would like to use the bar space available in the main stand in a more creative way, but has to stick with the current situation for now.

SP confirmed that Errol Pope will attend the game against Bromley on Saturday. His background is in banking. Due to his busy work schedule it is unlikely he will spend a great deal of time at the Club, so SP will run it on a daily basis, along with David Mills. SP explained that he (SP) is the majority shareholder, but was not sure of the exact split at the moment.

SP confirmed that they have no lease for the training facilities at Alvington, and so are looking at other options just in case.

SP said that he felt the playing budget was about average for the league, but YTFC have got value for money in the players they have signed. No additional signings are planned at the moment, and anyone coming in now needs to improve the team rather than adding numbers. Darren Sarll is happy with the squad, but they have to take into account that we may lose players in January.

The budget is being reviewed over the next few weeks, and is very fluid at the moment. There are some differences between the one that the previous owners submitted to the league and the one that the Club are working to at the moment. The budget has not been based on crowds increasing beyond the current levels. However, increased crowds will make a big difference to what is available – crowds of 4,000 could generate an additional £20k income per game, which could transform the club.

SP stated how important the Academy was, particularly to enable YTFC to produce its own assets. Our geographical location should give us a large pool of young players to choose from – they need to come to Yeovil rather than Southampton, Exeter, etc. However, funding for the Academy will half next season, and end the season afterwards (if the Club to not gain promotion back to the EFL), so the structure is under review. The National League is a tough physical league, which makes it difficult to blood young players, so consideration will have to be given to that in the review. SP stated that both Errol Pope and Darren Sarll have experience of football Academies. A meeting will also be held shortly with Yeovil College to see how they can develop their partnership.

SBr asked about a finance option for season tickets – SP confirmed this should be resolved next week. The Club should have data on supporters who took this option last year but have not renewed.

JH asked how SP plans to change the culture of the Club, particularly how to address the lack of leadership whilst keeping staff levels right. SP stated that he had run businesses that had been in similar situations before. He will be talking to all staff over the next few weeks, and it is likely that cut backs will be required. We are a non-league club now and have to be set up as such. However, once complete the Club will be left with a more dynamic and secure staff team – no one will get away without contributing. YTFC needs to ensure it has the right people in the right positions, and if not, it will get them. He would also like to increase the use of volunteers to complement the paid Club staff. SP felt there might be a lack of morale at the Club (non-playing side), due to a lack of empowerment and would look to address this.

SP wants to focus on driving up revenue, but acknowledges companies need a good reason to invest in the Club. He will also focus on increasing secondary spend at the Club, including a vision to offer high quality food and drink. JH suggested the angle of using YTFC as a champion of Somerset products. BO recommended speaking to Yeovil Ales, based just over the road from Huish Park. The Trust also agreed to pass on contact details for a catering consultant who is happy to work with the Club.

JH said that the Glovers Trust published a blueprint for the Club, outlining what we felt the core values and standards should be. SP requested that a copy of this is forwarded to him. VE asked if all the advertising boards around the ground had been paid for – it turned out that this was not the case and this will be addressed.

DM asked whether there was a plan for fan representation at Board level. SP said he was undecided on the make-up of the Board at the moment, but expected it to include 4 or 5 people. He said it was likely that it would include fan representation.

SBr asked SP if he intended to speak to Geoff Twentyman on Radio Bristol. SP said he had no plans to but is happy to speak to media and supporters, and will not hide away.

SB stated that some supporters don't recognise the value of the Trust. SP said that he understood the role of Supporters Trust from working with other Football Clubs. He understands why there is sometimes a difficult relationship between those running clubs and supporters' groups, but also that they can be mutually beneficial. SBr stated that we want to help, but there will be times when we have to challenge him and the Club. SP stated he understood this and would not shy away from difficult conversations. He also expected to challenge the Trust and its' members as well, and expected us to make suggestions and help where we can, particularly in two key areas: engaging with the community (including increasing the number of young supporters, and getting supporters back to the Club); and developing relationships with local businesses. He is always open to good suggestions from anyone – groups or individual supporters.

SP confirmed that he does not yet have a business plan for the club, but will do soon. At the moment he does not have a firm direction for the Club to go in, but it must move forward. The plan will be formulated over the next few weeks as he understands the Club and talks to staff and relevant third parties.

SP expressed his surprise at the small number of people interested in buying the Club. He sees it as a great opportunity, particularly because of the history and the large catchment area. He is very pleased to finally take over and is able to put some of his plans into action. Asked if he still expected to be here in 25 years, SP said it depends if he gets to buy Tottenham first.

BO asked about the possibility of bringing flags and banners back to the Thatcher's terrace. SP said he would speak to the stadium manager the following day, and as long as it's not a Health and Safety issue he would try and make sure this is allowed.